

Supplementary Materials: Three Ways of Activating Methods Learners

Exercise 1: An online scavenger hunt

Introduction. This exercise asks students to locate online primary sources related to a particular historical event. The aim of the exercise is to help students develop productive online search strategies which lead to the identification of reliable sources. Beforehand, the instructor needs to decide which historical event to study. It is important to minimize the odds that digital primary sources are widely available online. For this reason, it is recommended to select an event that took place prior to the advent of the Internet, probably well before the 1990s. It is also recommended to select an event that is not too historically prominent, since primary sources related to major historical events or events related to major historical figures will be more likely to have been digitized already. Finally, there might be language limitations to take into account. In an international classroom setting, it makes sense to find a historical event that has produced sources in a language shared by all students.

The instructor should then make a list of which databases students should be (made) aware of and to make sure that the databases actually contain or will lead to primary sources related to the chosen historical event. It is important to prevent that even appropriate search strategies render no results. It is also recommended to double-check which databases can be accessed freely online, which ones are accessible via the university library and which ones will be inaccessible to students.

Activity 1. Before coming to class, the students have done a few readings on doing research with documents, such as Thies (2002) or Trachtenberg (2006). Students receive the assignment to find

or identify the location of primary sources related to a particular historical event, selected in advance by the instructor. The exercise is taught in two parts. During the first activity, students roam freely online and carry out the assignment as they see fit. Students are encouraged to take notes on which sources they have found and how they have found them. The instructor walks around the classroom to observe which websites students visit. After some time, students report back on what they have found and how they have found it. The instructor uses their own observations of what students have done and calls on particular students to ensure that a diversity of search strategies is discussed. E.g. “Anna, I noticed that you were reading a publication in Google Books. How did you find it? And what did you find?”

Activity 2. In the second part of the exercise, better search strategies are discussed. Here, the instructor introduces the students to the databases they want the students to be familiar with. These might be databases to search for historical newspapers (e.g. Proquest Historical) or to locate relevant archival collections (e.g. Worldcat), but this may be adjusted in accordance with students’ needs and study program. This part of the exercise can be as either student-led or teacher-led. Sometimes there is a student in class who already is aware of the relevant databases and who knows how to work with them. In that case, the student may take the lead and show others how they found their sources. The instructor might also take the lead and demonstrate the appropriate search strategies myself. It helps to be in a computer lab, so students have computers at their disposal and the instructor can show examples of good searches using the projector. The students are then asked to repeat the exercise. The exercise ends with a short Q&A. It is recommended to give students a follow-up assignment, that allows them to practice by themselves the skills they have started to develop during class.

Exercise 2: Interview Bingo

Introduction. One of the biggest challenges in higher education is getting students to actively participate during class time, especially in larger groups. The traditional lecture format simply does not lend itself well for this. Luckily, there are plenty of other teaching techniques that not only motivate students to participate actively during class, but also ensure that the quality of participation increases. A fishbowl is a different way of organizing a debate (Silberman 1996). Students are divided into two concentric circles: a small group of students takes place in an inner circle, while the remainder of the class forms an outer circle around them. The students in the inner circle take part in the discussion. The students in the outer circle observe the discussion and take note of what happens. After a few minutes, the course instructor halts the discussion in the inner circle and asks the observing students to reflect on what happened. This way, students who are not speaking are involved in the discussion.

Activity 1. Before coming to class, all students have to do several readings on conducting interviews (Fuji 2012; Harvey 2011; Mosley 2013) and they have to prepare a list of interview questions on a given topic. The type of respondent (elite/non-elite) is also given. For instance, students in one workshop are to interview a fictional senior bureaucrat on government budget cutbacks, while in another the mock interview is held with a fictional citizen on tax evasion. During the workshop, two volunteers play out the interview inside the fishbowl. The other students observe. To structure their observations, the instructor provides bingo cards with a number of good and bad interviewing practices. The bingo cards are generated automatically using a web tool.

Each time the students observe something listed on their bingo cards, they cross off that box – until somebody has bingo.

Interview Bingo			
Leading question	Main question	Socially desirable answer	Awkward silence
Takes notes	Asks informed consent	Explains project	Thanks the interviewee
Elaboration prompt	Misunderstanding over question	Follow-up question	Asks for example
Clarification prompt	Mentions recording device	Non-verbal prompt	Vague question

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Activity 2. When a student calls bingo, the mock interview is halted. The student is asked to comment on the observations they made and also on what has been missing from the interview.

After a brief discussion, the interview continues with a new interviewer and interviewee. With the first round covering the beginning of the interview to approximately the half-way point and the second round picking up where the conversation left off until the end point, it is possible to a full semi-structured interview from start to finish. This exercise consistently leads to new observations and discussions, especially when students disagree on what they have observed! It also serves the original purpose of the fishbowl exercise by allowing those students, who feel uncomfortable being at the center of attention in the classroom, to actively participate in the mock interview.

Exercise 3: Process-tracing using true crime

Introduction. Process tracing is a method geared to ascertain causality in case study research. It is increasingly used as a way to trace causal paths between independent and dependent variables when the number of observation units is small, and where an experimental setting cannot be established (Collier, 2011; Mahoney, 2012). The application of process tracing and the ability to demonstrate the empirical connections between dependent and independent variables by way of observed evidence is a critical skill in much of students' work using qualitative evidence. This method resembles the techniques deployed by criminal investigators, which is why we use true crime for students to hone these techniques and then apply them on a social science research area.

Activity 1. After watching the online modules explaining different methods of process tracing, and notably the different tests developed by Mahoney (2012) and Collier (2011), students are asked to listen to an episode for a true crime podcast called They Walk Among Us (<http://theywalkamonguspodcast.com/>), which recounts the story of a true murder which took

place in the United Kingdom in 2016. After listening to the podcast, students are asked to put themselves in the role of a prosecutor in charge of gathering evidence to prove the culpability of the two suspects in the murder. For each piece of evidence mentioned in the podcast (e.g DNA evidence in a bathroom; a receipt for a knife; etc.), students are asked to apply the different tests outlined in the literature (see Collier 2011) to assess the strength of the evidence proving that a particular suspect effectively committed a crime. The main goal of this exercise is to make students familiar with the use of evidence to reconstruct causal processes between different variables, and assess the strength of different types of evidence.

Activity 2. Once students have practice process-tracing in a different (but very accessible) context than the one where social science research usually takes place, they are asked to apply process tracing methods in a more typical political science/public administration context. The political event used in the last version of the course is a political agreement reached in The Netherlands in 1982 between the government, trade unions and employers – the so-called Wassenaar agreement, see Visser and Hemerijck (1997) - believed to have paved the way for the path of economic expansion that characterized the Dutch economy in the 1990s. Students are presented with the basic facts of the agreement and given different types of evidence on developments of the Dutch economy after this agreement: economic data, academic articles, newspaper reports. They are then asked to connect these different types of evidence to this agreement to create a causal story, assessing again the strength of different types of evidence to test the hypothesis that this agreement effectively had a positive impact on economic growth.

References

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